

Verb Challenge

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Abstract: *Verb Challenge* is a Spanish verb conjugation puzzle where the player has to identify and tap blocks with pronouns, verb stems and verb endings in order to form correct sentences to advance in the game.

Introduction

Verb Challenge is a video game for iOS that seeks to help students to improve their grasp on Spanish verb conjugation. *Verb Challenge* is in a playable beta at the time of this writing and will be released by winter 2013 at the AppStore. The game will be described according to the framework: Seven Circumstances of Game-based Learning proposed by Arena (2011).

Who is the learner?

The intended audience for this game is 18-34 year old people interested in Latin American culture and learning Spanish as a foreign language, who own or have access to an iOS device in a regular basis. The player may have basic or no knowledge of Spanish verb conjugation.

What is being learned?

Verb Challenge is intended to teach and reinforce the Spanish verb conjugation of the 100 most common verbs in Latin American Spanish. The game also helps the player to improve the four language skills: speaking, listening, writing and reading through three different gameplay modes designed to practice specific language skills (Figure 1). The game as well provides meaningful feedback for visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners through its user interface which takes advantage of the retina display, the accelerometers, the speakers, and the built-in microphone of iOS devices.

When does the learning occur?

Verb Challenge was designed with the goal of making conjugation written drills and conjugation charts obsolete by allowing students to learn and practice Spanish verb conjugation exclusively through its gameplay. Players have to build a pyramid before sunset by tapping blocks with pronouns, (blue), verb stems (yellow) and verb endings (pink) (Figure 1). Players can make combos to get access to power-ups that will help them to succeed in their task.

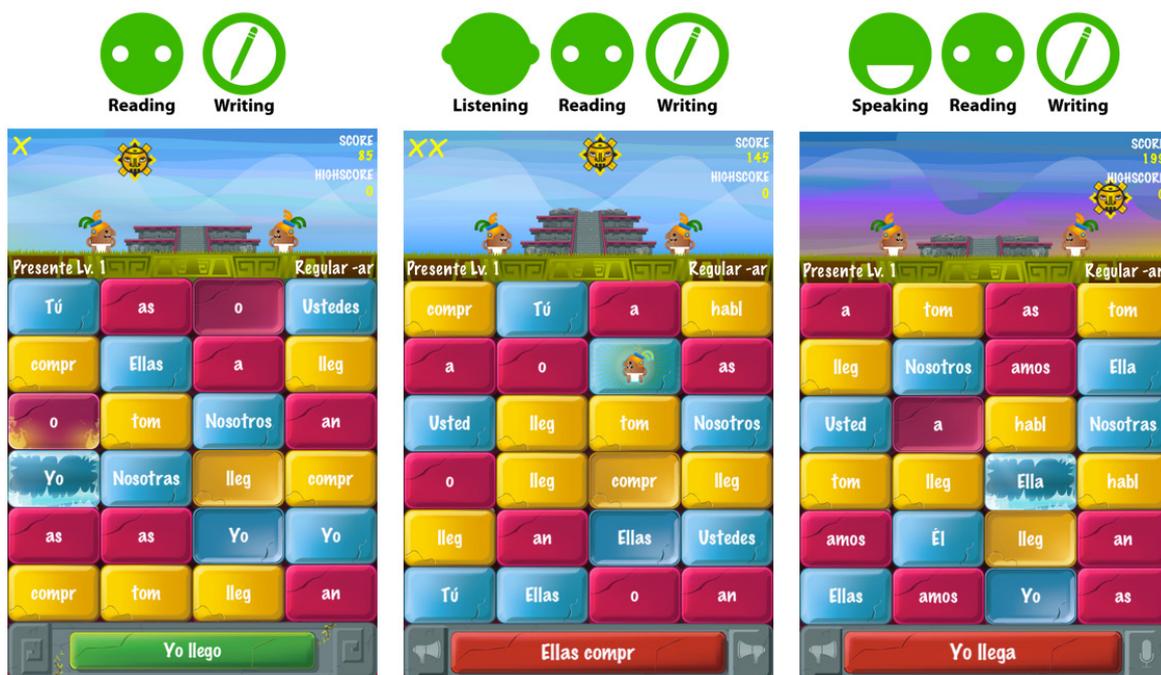


Figure 1: *Verb Challenge* gameplay modes

Why is the learner playing?

According to Adams (2010) learning occurs when at least one of the following conditions is met: (1) the learning process takes place in an enjoyable context, and (2) what is learnt provides useful mastery. Players may start playing *Verb Challenge* looking for a fast and fun way to master the Spanish verb conjugation, but they will keep playing since they will enjoy the learning process for two reasons: it takes place in an enjoyable context (the gameplay of *Verb Challenge*), and what players learn within the game will help them to advance in the game as well as in their language acquisition process. In other words the game provides useful both in-game and real life mastery to the players.

How does the learning occur?

Subject and verb ending relationship, a key aspect in Spanish verb conjugation, is intrinsically integrated within the game mechanics. The way the player discovers and learns this relationship is up to her. She can do it through trial-and-error by tapping and making different blocks combinations until the submit button turns green showing her that she made a correct sentence, or she can consult the conjugation paradigm of each verb by double tapping the verb stem block (yellow) she wants to know more about. Figure 2 shows from left to right a wrong sentence, a correct sentence and a verb paradigm. The player can as well double tap a pronoun block (blue) to get information about the pronoun he tapped, and double tap a verb ending block to get information about the tense she is currently practicing.



Figure 2: Classic Gameplay

With what does the learning occur?

Verb Challenge is a purpose-built educational game for iOS. According Johnson et al (2012), apps and tablet computing have a great potential for learning and may be broadly adopted in higher education within the next twelve months.

References

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Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Adriana Medellín Ph.D, Mónica Sanaphre Ph.D, Luisa Josefina Alarcón Ph.D, for their friendship, advice and support. To everyone in Chido Games involved in the development of *Verb Challenge*, you rock!